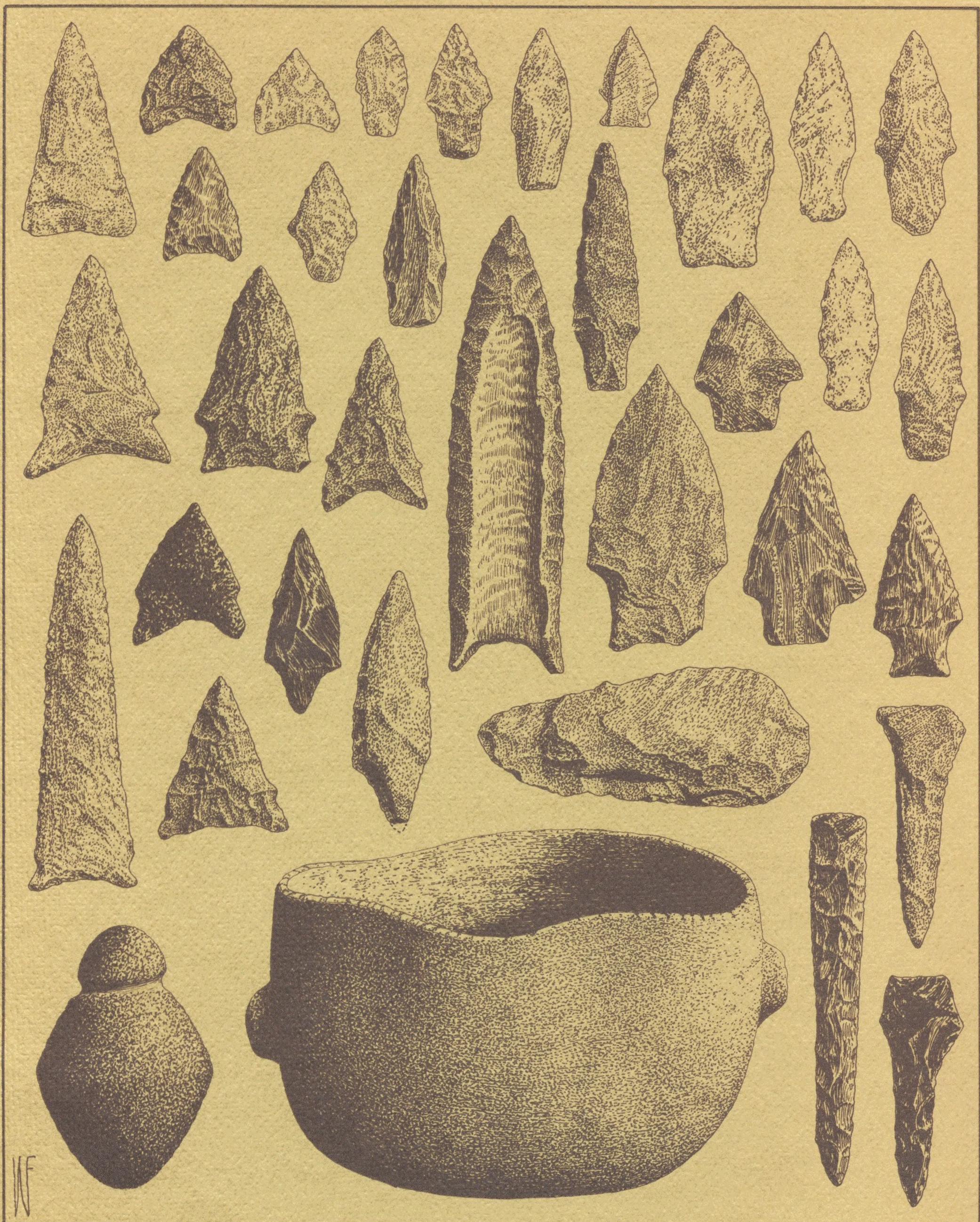


THE INDIAN HISTORY
OF
ATTLEBORO



by
Dr. Maurice Robbins



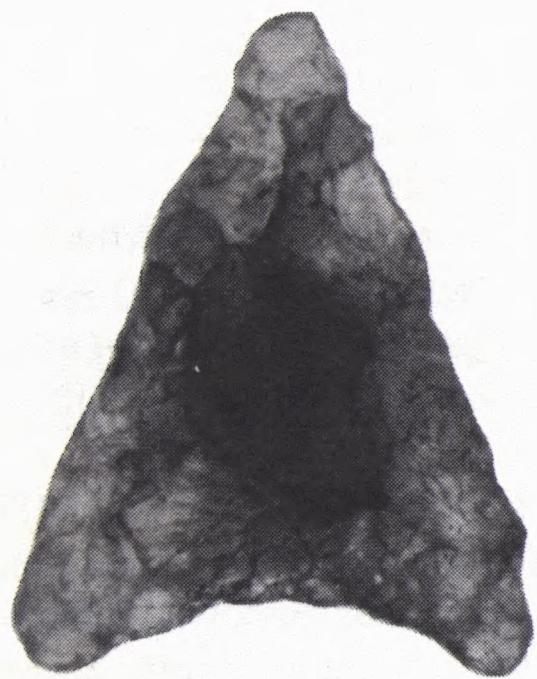
The drawings above are of implements typical of those made and used by aborigines of the Attleboro area up to about A.D. 300. Illustrations include a Paleo Age fluted spear point (center) dated 6,000 B.C. or earlier, later arrow and spear points, a knife, drills, a plummet line sinker, and a stone bowl. Artifacts are reproduced here slightly less than two-thirds actual size except for the stone bowl, which is twenty inches long. Renderings were done by Mr. William S. Fowler, Editor, Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and are reproduced here through the courtesy of the Society. A comprehensive description of artifact types pertinent to the prehistoric era of Attleboro's past is contained in the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, vol. 25, No. 1, October 1963 ("Classification of Stone Implements of the Northeast,") and vol. 27, Nos. 3 and 4, April - July, 1966 ("Ceremonial and Domestic Products of Aboriginal New England,") both by William S. Fowler.

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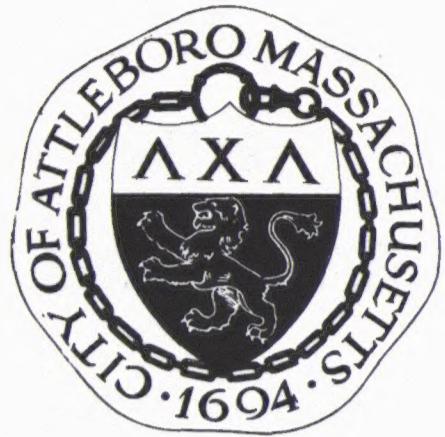
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His Honor, Thomas A. Piggott, Mayor of the City

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FOREWORD

As Chairman of the Attleboro Historical Commission, I would like to state, in brief outline, the purpose of this publication, and to describe how it was created. Obviously, it bears the mark of many dedicated and talented hands.

Those who have a deep interest in the history of Attleboro have long been conscious of the need for further and continuing historical research – revising and augmenting the monumental early efforts of John Daggett and others. His Honor, Mayor Thomas A. Piggott, recognizing the need for and value of an organized probing of our past, called into existence the Attleboro Historical Commission. This Commission took over functions and materials earlier generated by a historical committee that had been appointed by the Chamber of Commerce of the Attleboro Area.

A basic objective of the Historical Commission is the compilation and publication of a new and comprehensive history of the City. This formidable task has necessarily been projected as a long-term goal, achievable only by a series of monographs, compiled as dictated by the availability of skills and financial support.

The 275th Anniversary of the founding of Attleboro happily provides the first opportunity for implementing the Historical Commission's main goal and greatest hope. We were fortunate, beyond all expectation, in having in our midst a person eminently qualified to write what we conceive to be Chapter One of a new History of Attleboro – a chapter shrouded until now in the mists of antiquity. Our 275th Anniversary Committee, headed by Mr. Robert E. Collins, Jr., enthusiastically endorsed the idea of sponsoring a scholarly publication that would serve as a permanent testimonial to this impressive civic observance. Mr. Collins devoted much time and encouragement to the initial stages of the project. Mr. William N. Ward, in a dual role as Executive Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and as Councilman-at-Large of the City of Attleboro, not only enlisted the support of the Chamber to provide the financial underwriting for publication, but also contributed invaluable advice and assistance, without which the project would have been difficult. It is with appreciation that I commend our member, Dr. George S. Gibb, who edited, designed, and supervised publication of this first chapter of the new history. I also wish to acknowledge and pay special tribute to my fellow members of the Historical Commission, whose firm and knowledgeable support has helped bring this pioneering venture to fruition.

All of this advice and encouragement would, of course, have been to little avail had not the City, among its many cultural assets, been fortunate enough to count a person of great distinction in his field. Dr. Robbins, the author of this monograph – this first chapter in a new History of Attleboro – is a scholar of national repute, recognized as a leading authority in archaeology by amateur and professional experts alike. Out of his lifetime of study emerges a work that many of us feel is completely unprecedented in the field of community history.

Dr. Robbins was born in Mansfield, Massachusetts, and was educated in the public schools of that town. Later he graduated from Wentworth Institute in Boston and served in the United States Army during World War I. He came to Attleboro in 1922 and for forty-two years was associated with the New England Power Company. He studied archaeology and allied subjects at Brown University and at the University of Chicago. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from McKinley-Roosevelt Institute of Chicago.

Dr. Robbins is Director of the Bronson Museum of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society – quite possibly one of the finest private museums of its kind in the world. A former president of the Society, he has directed the work of its members at eleven archaeological sites. He is a member of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Society for American Archaeology, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a Fellow of the Anthropological Association of Canada and the Pennsylvania Institute of Anthropology. In 1964 he was awarded the citation of Master Archaeologist by the Guild of American Prehistorians. His articles have appeared in American Antiquity, Scientific American, Canadian Anthropology, and the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society. He is the author of The Amateur Archaeologist's Handbook, published in 1965 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company of New York, the first substantial work of its kind ever published in this country and, immediately upon publication, a volume recognized as a classic in its field.

The Indian History of Attleboro seems, to those of us who have been privileged to participate in its publication, to be both a monument and a challenge. Clearly, it is a testimonial to highly productive cooperation between civil officials, business sponsors, and resident scholars. But also, by its impressive excellence, it serves to call forth and to provide guidelines for the efforts of those who we hope will write the subsequent chapters of our city's new history.

In the past we seek and find the great lessons that equip us to deal with the problems of today and tomorrow. This is history's chief justification. Out of an awareness of what Attleboro was comes a comprehension of what it may and could and should be in years to come. We respectfully, hopefully dedicate this chapter to those who have pride in our past, hope for our future, and the interest and energy to search the annals of local history. May the example of this effort encourage others to join in the task of constructively relating a rich historical legacy to the challenge of community development today and tomorrow.

Mrs. Donald K. Phillips
CHAIRMAN
Attleboro Historical Commission



In the first edition of his "Sketch of the History of Attleborough," John Daggett says, "How long in ages past this faire domaine has been in the possession of natives, the record of time has never revealed." Since these words were written, some portion of that record of time has been revealed. Daggett would have been amazed to learn that the period of native occupation is now measured in thousands rather than in hundreds of years.

As the historian gazes backward along the path of human progress, his view may be likened to that of one who looks through binoculars. Objects in the foreground can be seen in detail, and the greater the distance the wider his field of view becomes. The background, however, is softened by shadow and obscured by mist. Similarly, the source record of the recent past will furnish a wealth of detail, but the prehistoric background is partially hidden by the semi-darkness of antiquity.

If, for example, one is to write the history of a given city or town, he may select from among the source records those items which are pertinent to that particular political entity. Occasionally he must refer to events outside of the selected area, when it is needful to explain the effect upon local happenings. The prehistorian, by the nature of his sources, must consider events which took place on a large scale. His bounds must be geographical rather than political. The Attleboro we know is but a small part of the homeland of the Wampanoags and of the still more ancient people who once occupied the area. One must accept as a fact that the history of the area that we call Attleboro was at one time indistinguishable from the history of all of southern New England. In the beginning one must treat with the history of the greater area, but as the present is approached, the view is narrowed and eventually the prehistory of Attleboro begins to emerge.

So we open our history of Attleboro on the larger stage and speak first of continental events, gradually narrowing our view until at last we come to episodes which took place within the present political limits of the city.

The boundaries observed by a prehistoric people are seldom precise. They have never been laid out on a map, and in all probability were subject to constant change as the loyalties of petty chiefs shifted from one group to another, or as stronger tribes pre-empted choice hunting

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grounds. The Wampanoags, who occupied most of Bristol and Plymouth counties at the time of European invasion, were, for example, under pressure from the powerful Narragansetts to relinquish some of their territory along the Seekonk River.

In Indian days, the river systems were the highways and along these, as well as at sheltered spots by the "bitter water," one will find the remains of their villages. Attleboro was "back country," used for hunting rather than living space, occupied for a few months each season by expanded family groups.

The Wampanoags that were known to the early settlers of the region were late comers themselves. Other even more primitive people had lived here for many centuries before. How the ancient people divided this land will never be known. All we know is that they were here. But all of these are a part of the history of Attleboro.

A few short years ago it was thought that there were no inhabitants in New England prior to 1000 B.C. (3,000 years ago). Before 1946 there existed no scientific method of measuring elapsed time. There was nothing available to serve as what scientists call a "time bearer" . . . something that would provide an accurate means of arriving at a definite date. In some other areas, where the environment was more favorable, tree-ring dating (dendrochronology) had furnished some clues to the antiquity of human culture. In still other areas geological events, such as volcanic action, gave prehistorians a clue concerning the age with which they were dealing. But here in New England the "educated guess" was standard procedure. Now we know how inaccurate those guesses were.

During the research leading to the discovery of atomic fission, a "calendar" was found concealed in a widely distributed yet common substance, carbon. One of the elements of carbon is a radio-active isotope called Carbon-14. The rate of disintegration of Carbon-14 is known; its range is within that of New World archaeology. Anything that once lived and can be reduced to carbon can be made to reveal the date of its own death. Samples of carbon are available to the archaeologist in the form of charcoal from the cooking fires of ancient man. The date of the death of the tree from which the charcoal was derived will approximate the time at which this fire burned.

There are, of course, some errors inherent in this calendrical system. One cannot, for example, determine that a tree died on October 11,

1202, but it is possible to learn that the tree died in the year 1202, plus or minus forty years. When one is dealing in terms of five or ten thousand years, there is little significance in forty years one way or another. The source of error which the archaeologist must guard against is that of association. He must be certain that the artifact he desires to date is directly associated with the carbon he takes for a sample.

Since the advent of radio-carbon dating, both archaeologists and geologists have been forced to rewrite their calendars. As a result, the prehistory of the New World has become much more meaningful and many seeming contradictions have been resolved.

When we believed that man did not arrive in New England until about 3,000 years ago, we assumed that the conditions under which he lived were not too different from those of today. Now that we have learned that man was here as long as 10,000 years, we realize that he had to contend with a harsh environment. The climate, topography, and the mammals were quite different. Our view through the binoculars suddenly widened. We must look back to the time of the continental ice, the Pleistocene Age as it is called by geologists. What were the conditions in New England and Attleboro during this period?

The last of the four glaciers that invaded New England is known as the Wisconsin. It began to advance some 75,000 years ago and ground to a halt about 15,000 years before the present. Then commenced a long period of melting, interrupted by a number of minor re-advances. Actually we are today still in the melting stage of the Wisconsin Ice.

When more snow falls in the winter than the summer sun can melt, glaciers begin to form. If the mantle of the snow and ice becomes sufficiently thick, the mass begins to move very slowly. Everything in its path is altered or destroyed. The rocky foundation of New England was scarred, furrowed, and polished by the moving ice. Tons of soil were scooped up and pushed before it. Huge rocks were torn loose and became embedded in the ice. Those in its lower layer acted as tools to plane and scour the surfaces over which they passed. An example of this can be seen in "glacial rock" on Thacher Street, (coming from County Square, on the right just before the railroad bridge.)

At its maximum the Wisconsin Ice stood more than a mile thick over New England. Finally the climate began to improve. As it grew warmer, the advance of the ice slowed . . . halted, and it began to melt. Rivers running across the ice, carrying tons of fine soil in suspension, cut deep channels in its surface. A melting glacier leaves behind it unmistakable

evidence of its former presence. The point of maximum advance will be marked by a great ridge formed by the soil and rock that had been pushed by its front. This ridge is called a terminal moraine. There will also be side and interlobate moraines. Traces of these moraines can be seen in many places in New England. Another reminder of the former presence of the ice are the great boulders scattered about the landscape. These, called "erratics", were left stranded when the ice sheet melted. As the ice mass became stagnant, large ice blocks, surrounded and covered by soil which retarded their melt rate, dotted the countryside. When the ice finally melted, kettle holes resulted, and many of our lakes and ponds were formed in them. The terminal moraine of the Wisconsin Ice can be seen on Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and Long Island.

There are other aspects of glaciation on a continental scale which are not so apparent to the casual observer. Where did the tremendous amount of water come from that was locked up in the ice? It had to come from the oceans, and as a consequence sea levels were lowered significantly. At the time of maximum ice, it has been estimated that the sea level off the coast of New England was several hundred feet below that of today. Because of this, the coastline of that day was many miles east of its present location. The land thus exposed is called the "coastal plain." Another effect of mile-thick ice was to depress the surface upon which it rested. Can you imagine the great weight of this ice together with its content of soil and rock? When the ice began to melt, the rivers ran off across the coastal plain into the ocean. The earth surface, relieved of the downward pressure, started to recover or rise. This phenomenon is called "uplift." These changes in topography were further complicated by wind action. As the soggy surface of the recently exposed land dried out, the fine soil was picked up and redistributed. Slowly, over hundreds of years, the forces of nature worked, and eventually the now familiar landscape of New England began to emerge. Into this maelstrom came first, mammals, and then men who preyed upon them. If we are to understand ancient man and his culture, we must study him as he reacted to his environment.

Modern man has learned to control to some degree the environment in which he lives. Ancient man was forced to adapt to it or perish in the attempt. The cultural history of man is the story of this adaptation. We must strive to visualize the problems with which he was confronted if we are to learn the answers at which he arrived.

Ernst Antevs is one of the foremost students of the Pleistocene in the

New World. He divides the post-Pleistocene into three phases. The Anathermal, which began between nine and ten thousand years ago and lasted for about 5,000 years, was originally cool and moist but gradually became warmer. Then came the Altithermal, from five to three thousand years ago, during which the climate was warmer and somewhat drier than the present, especially in the American Southwest, the time during which the deserts were formed. And finally, the Medithermal, which began about three thousand years ago and was relatively cool and more moist. This last phase is still in progress.

Archaeologists also divide the post-Pleistocene into three major cultural periods. The Paleo-Indian period began in the Southwest about thirteen thousand years ago (somewhat later in the East). About eight thousand years ago, the mega-fauna of the Pleistocene became extinct to all practical purposes; Paleo-Indians as a culture disappeared about the same time. This long period was succeeded by that of the Archaic Indian. His culture seems to have been somewhat more sophisticated than that of his predecessors. The final phase of Indian culture began about three thousand years ago with the advent of agriculture. This is known in the East as the Woodland culture. It was rudely interrupted by the appearance of Europeans.

Quite understandably our knowledge of the Paleo-Indian is fragmentary. We are better informed concerning the Archaic Indian and even better acquainted with the Indian of the Woodland period. In the latter period, of course, we have historical references provided by our own ancestors, who were in direct contact with the aboriginal culture of colonial times.

The first evidence that man was a contemporary of the mammoth, the mastodon, and an extinct form of bison was found in New Mexico. The skeleton of the bison was found near the town of Folsom. In association with it were stone projectile points of an unfamiliar type. This was a most important discovery. It suggested a far greater antiquity for man in this hemisphere than had been previously believed. At this time (1926) carbon-dating was unknown. An attempt was made to arrive at a date by means of geological reference. The date has subsequently been determined to be between nine and ten thousand years before the present. The Folsom point, named for the town in which it was first found, differs radically from the later types found in the New World. For that matter there are no close parallels in the Old World either. The points are made by pressure flaking, have an average length of about two inches, and are thin, leaf-shaped blades with a concave base. The feature that distinguishes them from other points, is the

removal of a longitudinal flake, usually from both faces. The result is a hollow-ground appearance. Folsom points are never found with mammoth or mastodon, only with the extinct bison.

In 1932 a slightly different type of fluted point was found at Clovis, New Mexico. This was a much larger artifact, but was not as well made as the Folsom point. Again it was in direct association with extinct mammals — this time the mammoth. With the Clovis points were gravers, a needle-pointed artifact to which it is difficult to assign a function, and a skin scraper of distinctive pattern. Clovis points, in the Southwest, are older than Folsom points. They have been carbon-dated in that area in the 13,000-year range.

Except for a few widely scattered surface finds, fluted points have appeared at only three New England sites to date. The Bull Brook site in Ipswich, Massachusetts, has produced several hundred of these ancient points. A carbon date from Bull Brook suggests a date of between nine and ten thousand years. Unfortunately, this site has been badly disturbed by bull-dozing. Little could be learned of the nature of the early occupation except for an approximate date and the fact that Paleo-Indians have lived there. The Reagan site in Vermont also produced Clovis-like points together with the graver and the typical scraper. No carbon was present from which a date could be obtained.

The third site in New England from which Clovis-like points, gravers, and scrapers have been taken is the Wapanucket site at Assawompsett Lake in Middleboro, Massachusetts. This site is, at the date of writing, being excavated by a group from the Bronson Museum. At this site there has been little disturbance aside from surface plowing. Further work here may furnish some additional information concerning the Paleo-Indian of the eastern seaboard. Fluted points and associated tools from this site are on display at the Bronson Museum. So far no charcoal has been found in association with these ancient specimens at Wapanucket. Their age is probably comparable to those from the Bull Brook site.

No projectile points of the fluted type have so far been reported from any site in Attleboro. This absence may be explained by the fact that all of the sites on record in Attleboro were discovered by surface hunting only. As far as the writer is aware, no thorough excavation has ever been attempted at any of these sites. Fluted points would presumably lie too deep to be brought to the surface by mere plowing. We can assume that Paleo-Indian hunters roamed about the swamps and along the rivers of Attleboro in search of food, and we can only hope that

someday the fluted point will appear.

During the period of early man, the climate of Attleboro was cool and moist. The flora was probably tundra-like, followed by boreal or evergreen forest. During the tundra period large mammals as well as smaller game would have been present. A boreal forest environment is not suitable for most mammals. The Attleboro of that day was far inland; the wide coastal plain extended many miles to the east and south. Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard were mere hills on a barren landscape.

As the climate grew warmer, the ocean levels rose higher and higher, and the evergreen forests gave way to beech and oak. The large mammals of the Pleistocene disappeared along with the Paleo-Indian and were replaced by more modern mammals and by Archaic man. By five thousand years ago the climactic change was marked. From this time onward we find plentiful evidence of man and his activities. Attleboro abounds in sites of Archaic man. There are hundreds of his stone tools in the Bronson museum.

If you have been following closely the dates heretofore mentioned, you will have noted that a gap of about four thousand years appears between the Bull Brook date of nine thousand years for Paleo-Indians and the five thousand year date for Archaic man at the Wapanucket site in Middleboro. Up to now no site in New England has produced a radio-carbon date that falls within that four thousand year gap. The Bronson Museum has obtained eight radio-carbon dates which fall between 4,700 and 3,200 years ago. (Seven samples from the Wapanucket sites and one from Bear Swamp in Berkeley.) All of these dates are from charcoal associated with the typical tools of the Archaic period. There have been claims made that early Archaic sites, dating between 6,000 and 5,000 years ago, have been found in New England, but this dating has been based entirely on the typology of the artifacts found. There is no good reason to accept this supposition. It is possible to differentiate between typical Archaic artifacts and those from the later Woodland period, but there is at present no sound basis upon which Archaic artifacts can be separated into early and late periods. This is not to say that there are no sites in this area which date between five and nine thousand years. There well may be such sites but they have not yet been found.

On the other hand, it is tempting to theorize that for these milleniums Indian occupancy of the area might have been sparse. During much of this mysterious period, we know that the dense boreal forest covered the hills and plains of what today is southeastern New England. This

habitat, as noted earlier, did not support heavy concentrations of game. It is possible that the Indians were instead living on the extensive coastal plains, where all evidence of their existence has long since been obliterated by encroaching waters. Proof of the theory may never be discovered, but the possibility exists that the relics of a vanished primitive civilization — an Indian Atlantis — lie buried fathoms deep off our New England shores.

Thirty-eight sites appear on the accompanying map of Attleboro. Most of them have produced stone tools which indicate that they have an Archaic component. We can, with confidence, say that Indians in considerable numbers roamed about Attleboro as long as five thousand years. At some of the sites, artifacts from the Woodland period appear in quantity. Most of the Attleboro sites are small compared with the large villages that have been located along the Taunton River and around the lakes of Middleboro and Lakeville.

The Archaic people were hunters, fishermen, and gatherers of wild natural foods. Agriculture was not a part of their culture. Theirs was a sort of hand-to-mouth existence. In their villages there were no large food stores. Except for smoking, they knew no way of preserving food. Any large group of people in this type of economy would soon strip the area of natural food. Game would be driven away by overhunting; the available supply of edible roots, nuts, and berries would quickly be consumed. Their very way of life required them to be nomads. The evidence suggests that Archaic sites were occupied for short periods, but that the inhabitants returned again and again to a favorite spot. A cycle of movement developed. In the winter the Indians would be scattered about the inland hunting areas in family groups. When the spring run of fish began, they gathered in larger numbers at their favorite fishing sites along the river courses. The momentary abundance of food permitted the Indians to gather in larger groups and to remain at a given site as long as it lasted. For a few weeks they enjoyed a change of fare, and they smoked quantities of fish for summer use. They also seem to have used this opportunity to carry out tribal ceremonies.

At the Wapanucket site we have found striking evidence of mortuary rites which indicate that the culture was far more sophisticated than was previously thought probable at so early a date. When the run of fish began to slow down, or possibly when their appetite for this kind of food began to lag, they moved on down the rivers to the seashore. There they feasted upon shellfish and enjoyed the climate even as we do today. All too soon the summer would pass and they would have to pack up their meager belongings and return to winter hunting grounds.



ARCHAIC AGE VILLAGE, representative of aborigine settlement in the Attleboro area between about 6,000 B.C. and 2,000 B.C. Diorama in Bronson Museum constructed on the basis of evidence gathered at scientifically directed excavations in Southeastern Massachusetts.



In the year A.D. 69, the corner of North Main and County Streets may have looked like this. Diorama in Bronson Museum of a Woodland Age village, representative of aborigine settlements in Attleboro from about 2,000 B.C. to the time of first recorded European contacts.

When the Indians learned how to plant and raise maize, a major change took place in their way of life. Agricultural skills made it possible to lay up a store of food for the winter . . . the day of hand-to-mouth living was over. Of course they continued to hunt and fish — berries and nuts were still a part of their diet — but the day of complete dependence upon natural foods was gone. However, the very existence of these new sources of grown foods tied them to the land. They could no longer roam as they had in the old days; during the spring and summer the growing crop must be protected from predators. After the harvest was gathered and the grain stored in pits, they had to stay close by the stores . . . primitive transportation means were not adequate to permit quantities of stores to be moved far. But population increased as the ability to support life increased; villages grew larger. There was also another aspect of the stable economy. No longer was all of the aborigine's time taken up by the everlasting quest for food. There were leisure moments in which one could begin to think about better ways of life. Social and political ideas began to form and ceremonial concepts developed. This significant change in subsistence pattern not only forced the Indians to forsake nomadism, but it encouraged them to reorganize the non-material traits which mark a step along the road to civilization. These cultural changes are most apparent in the archaeological recoveries from Woodland villages.

The artifacts from the Richardson collection in the Bronson Museum are what are known to archaeologists as "surface finds." They were collected by searching plowed fields or from areas otherwise disturbed. Only the most ancient of artifacts lie below the reach of the farmer's plow here in New England. Artifacts of Archaic provenience have been brought to the surface and intermixed with those of the Woodland period wherever the land had been plowed. To the "relic" collector, all of these specimens were simply Indian artifacts. He could not separate them into time periods; in fact he probably did not know that such differences existed.

It is only since the techniques of controlled archaeological excavation were developed that we have become able to recognize the several cultures that are present in most surface collections. Fortunately some of the earlier relic collectors were methodical enough to keep a record of the locations where they found artifacts and to catalog the stone tools according to the sites from which they were taken.

The Richardson collections and some of the smaller collections at the Bronson Museum are accompanied by such catalogs and the artifacts

are numbered so that they can be identified according to site location. The majority of the sites shown on the accompanying map were discovered and searched for artifacts long before Attleboro was as built up as it is today. Areas of Indian occupation have been bisected by roads, cut up into house lots, and covered by modern buildings. Comparatively little land is now being cultivated within the city limits. The original topography is so altered that it is difficult to visualize the area as it was in the days of Indian occupation.

We have in the Bronson Museum, however, the artifacts and the records from a number of sites in the Taunton River area which have been carefully excavated. The horizontal distribution and the vertical position of each artifact is known. The association of specimens and their relation to other features such as fireplaces, refuse pits, and house floors has been carefully determined. With this data it has been possible to isolate cultural components as they existed at the several locations. Using charcoal samples when obtainable, the sites have been dated and the artifact collections arranged in chronological sequence. Through this study, the patterns of culture have begun to emerge, and the various stages of Archaic and Woodland occupation are recognizable. Now this data can be used as a pilot to control the sorting of artifacts from surface collections so as to identify the cultural periods represented at the various Attleboro sites.

We are indebted to the Richardsons for most of the information plotted on the location map. Charles and John Richardson were residents of Attleboro from childhood. They were avid collectors of Indian "relics" and spent much of their spare time searching for plowed fields or gardens which would produce new specimens for their collections. They did not, of course, locate all of the sites which existed in the area; even in their day many had been destroyed or were not being cultivated.

It has been somewhat difficult, even with the available catalogs, to locate some of the sites which these collectors described. What was more logical than to identify a location by the owner's name? But now that half a century has passed, these names are no longer meaningful. Many such sites had to be located all over again. In a number of instances a series of small plots were on adjoining properties and were obviously simply plowed areas on a single site. These are a few of the problems that had to be resolved in order to compile a complete map.

The locations were not all occupied by Indians at one time. As we have previously said, Archaic Indians were nomadic and seldom remained long at one camp. The later Woodland groups were more sedentary

because of their much improved subsistence pattern. It might be more accurate to think of both banks of the several rivers as continuous zones of occupation, with the exception of swamp and lowland which were unsuitable to the Indians.

The Massachusetts Archaeological Society has compiled a map of the state on which some two thousand Indian camps and villages are located. This is based upon topographical maps of the U. S. Geological Survey. The state map is made up of a number of sheets which are called "quadrangles," to each of which a letter and number have been given. Attleboro, with other towns, appears on the quadrangle designated as R-2. Individual sites are numbered from 1 on each map. In our illustration we have used a part of the R-2 quadrangle; the missing site numbers are located in adjoining towns. On the accompanying map, the prefix R-2 has been dropped in the interest of clarity and simplicity.

REPRESENTATIVE ATTLEBORO SITES

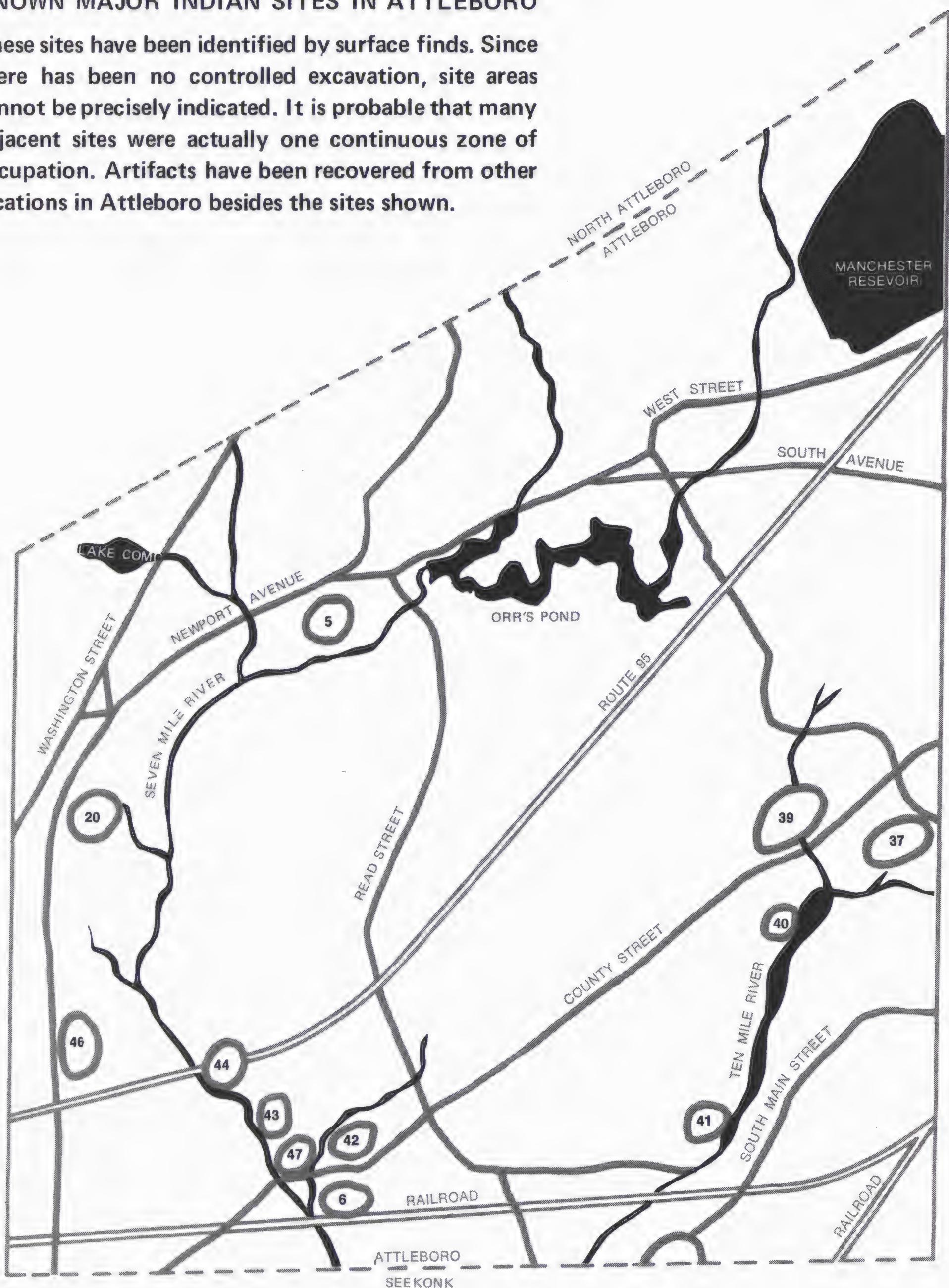
SITE 4: East of North Avenue between it and the swamp, an area now occupied largely by Hayward Field. This site has been considerably disturbed by grading. Originally there was a gentle easterly slope to the lowland. A spring on the northern perimeter fed a small brook which flowed south into the Ten Mile River. An imposing list of artifacts recovered from this site includes a stone effigy pipe. The typology of the artifacts indicates both Archaic and Woodland occupation.

SITE 6: This is a level, well drained tract on the east bank of the Seven Mile River. In the Richardson catalog it was known as the "City Line Site." The occupied area extends to the south from a low ridge which served to protect the camp from northerly winds. On the east the area terminates in a brook and swamp. Artifacts suggest that it was occupied only by Archaic people.

SITE 8: This is a combination of cataloged spots which were known as "Mutlow's Garden," "Orange Street Camp," "Brownell's Back Yard," "Horton's Rye Field," and "Cedar Swamp Hill." The artifacts tell us that the occupation was by both Archaic and Woodland peoples. An interesting note by Charles Richardson says, "Major Horton plowed this field last year and planted rye. After the rains this spring I found a large number of arrow points, a chisel, two pestles, and some fragments of pottery on my first visit. A. N. Brownell found a fine stone axe in his back yard." (The clay pottery is a diagnostic of the Woodland period.)

KNOWN MAJOR INDIAN SITES IN ATTLEBORO

These sites have been identified by surface finds. Since there has been no controlled excavation, site areas cannot be precisely indicated. It is probable that many adjacent sites were actually one continuous zone of occupation. Artifacts have been recovered from other locations in Attleboro besides the sites shown.





SITE 11: Two Richardson sites are combined under this designation. Here the east bank of the Ten Mile River rises rather sharply to a level area upon which are Benefit and Hope Streets. The occupation extends north to a swamp beyond Hope Street extension. The eastern edge has been eliminated by the railroad. It was used by both Archaic and Woodland Indians.

SITE 12: Between Pleasant Street and the branch railroad was a large area of Indian occupation, most of which is now the Texas Instrument complex. Richardson speaks about a number of springs about a swampy area. A ball park was formerly located somewhere on the site. The artifact distribution extended across the present Forest Street and included several gardens in the area now taken up by the First National Stores. Both Archaic and Woodland specimens are present.

SITE 22: Included the Richardsons' "Woodland Cemetery," "Shuttle Shop," and "Brady Field" sites. The occupation extended from the river north almost to Holden Street and across North Main Street to include the high ground along West Street. The eastern terminus is at the swamp east of Bank Street. The heaviest concentration was on the portion now occupied by Woodlawn Cemetery. Richardson also found artifacts south of the river where St. John's Church formerly stood. The typology is both Archaic and Woodland in character.

SITE 23: An area on both sides of Deantown Road northwest of the Ten Mile River. Artifacts are reported from a number of gardens in the rear of homes. The number of artifacts in the Richardson collection are few considering the area. This is probably explained by the extensive collection of Mr. John Hardt, who lived in the area. The occupation was Woodland, with a few more ancient specimens.

SITE 25: In this site are included the "Horton Angell Factory," and "C. O. Sweet's Garden." The south bank of the Bungay River rises sharply to a level area well above flood water. The occupied area extends across Bank Street for some distance but the artifacts were concentrated on the land occupied by factory buildings. Typologically, the artifacts are from both Archaic and Woodland times.

SITE 26: This site is in the heart of the business area of the city, north of the Ten Mile River. Richardson lists "Dr. Bronson's Garden," "Battershall's Back Yard," and the "Crandall Site." Dr. Bronson's house stood where the present 8 North Main Street Building is located; the Battershall property stood on the parking lot of the Attleboro Trust Company, and the Crandall property is now occupied by the old telephone

building and a service station. Prior to modern construction, the land surface sloped west and south to the river. Richardson tells us that there were four active springs which fed a small brook that emptied into the river in the rear of the Bronson home. The artifacts point to a long occupation by both Archaic and Woodland Indians.

SITE 27: The area now covered by buildings and roads directly across the river from Site 26. The heaviest Indian occupation was on the highland in the Second, Grove, King, and Cliff Street area. In addition to artifacts in the Richardson collection, the Museum has a few specimens found by the late Howard Smith. This area was occupied by both Archaic and Woodland Indians.

SITE 28: Another area of extensive occupation was on the easterly side of the Ten Mile River where Richardson listed his "White's Lumber Yard," "Eden Factory," "Carpenter Lumber Yard," "Ezra Arnold's Garden," "Capron's Hen Yard," and "Briggs Hotel" sites. The occupation apparently extended from the South Main Street Fire Station southward across Wall Street and included the freight yard. From the river eastward to the railroad including South Main and Railroad Avenue artifacts were found wherever the surface was disturbed. Some years ago when the street was being resurfaced, several arrow points were picked up in front of the Sun Publishing Company. The large collection from this site includes both Archaic and Woodland specimens.

SITE 29: From Beacon Street south to Olive Street were the following sites: "Beacon Street, Eden's Sand Pit, The River Meadow, Lyman Carpenter's Garden, and John Eden's Garden." Garden Street, which bisects the area, was formerly known as Wigwam Street although no one seems to recall the source of the name. The original land surface sloped from South Main Street westerly to the river. The railroad embankment has greatly changed the appearance of this area. Both Archaic and Woodland Indians used this site.

SITE 31: This is probably simply a continuation of Site 29. Signs of Indian occupation extend from Olive Street to the swamp and from the river to South Main Street. Most of the site is now covered by the Fernandes Store complex. Richardson enumerates a number of spots within the area at which he recovered artifacts; "Manchester's Field, Bridge, Lamb Garden sites, Louie Lamb's spring, the Turntable Lot, and the Cornell Farm." The spring was near South Main Street and from it a small brook ran into the swamp off Clarence Street. Several years ago a group from the Bronson Museum undertook an excavation on what was the Manchester field. We found that the entire area had



STRAIGHT-BACK AXE. Hayward Field Site. Length 5 inches



FULL-GROOVED AXE. Battershall Garden Site. Length 4½ inches



FULL-GROOVED AXE. Capron Park Site. Length 7½ inches

All from Richardson Collection, Bronson Museum

been used as a work or camp area when the railroad was under construction. There were remains of long barracks-like buildings, thick lenses of coal ash, and other modern rubbish. We were told that a considerable amount of fill had been removed from the area, some of which was used to build the ramps for the railroad bridge. The occupation by Indians as indicated by the artifacts in the Richardson collection was heavy and included both Archaic and Woodland types.

SITE 32: Located on land occupied by the Dodgeville Mill. In the catalog the area is described as "a low flat between two branches of the river." Occasionally Richardson referred to it as the "Old Depot Site." The only artifacts are of Archaic origin.

SITE 36: Again, two cataloged sites have been combined. "Dodgeville Cemetery and the South Main Street Church Sites." The occupation was light and seems to have been confined to the Woodland period.

SITE 37: The Tiffany Street site is made up of Richardson's "John Daly's Garden," "Armel Garden," and the "Tiffany Street Site." Both Archaic and Woodland artifacts are in the material from the site.

SITE 42: A few non-diagnostic artifacts were found near the corner of Read and County Streets.

SITE 44: The few artifacts from this site are Archaic in provenience.

SITE 45: Included in this designation are Richardson's "YMCA Field," "Imhoff Garden," "Claflin Lot," and "Horton Grove" sites. The area of occupation lies between South Main Street and the Ten Mile River; it is bisected by Riverside Avenue. The collections from it are largely Woodland in type but a few Archaic artifacts indicate the presence of a small early component.

SITES 42, 43, 44, 47: These several sites are probably one area of Indian occupation. The artifacts recovered from them are few and are for the most part Archaic.

A few Richardson sites of particular interest are outside of the city limits but within the original North Purchase and included in the R-2 quadrangle. They do not appear on our illustration.

SITE 1: Located on a large dairy farm (Schofield's) in Cumberland, Rhode Island, on the north side of Sneeck Brook. It consists of a flat area of several acres. The slope is slightly southeast toward a small brook and swamp. The large artifact collection is mostly Woodland in origin, although a very few specimens may be Archaic. This site is of

particular interest because it may well be the Indian "Sinnichiconnet." Such a village is mentioned in the deed to Rehoboth North Purchase. If this is indeed Sinnichiconnet, it was the last area to be occupied by Indians within the original purchase. Possibly Sneech Brook is a contraction of the name.

SITE 2: Directly across the Cumberland road from Site 1 is another area where stone artifacts are found. This is probably an extension of Site 1. All of the specimens reported are from the Woodland period.

SITE 10: Abbott's Run site is in North Attleboro east of the Providence Branch Railroad on a small knoll overlooking a swamp. We have very little material from the site and the typology is not clear.

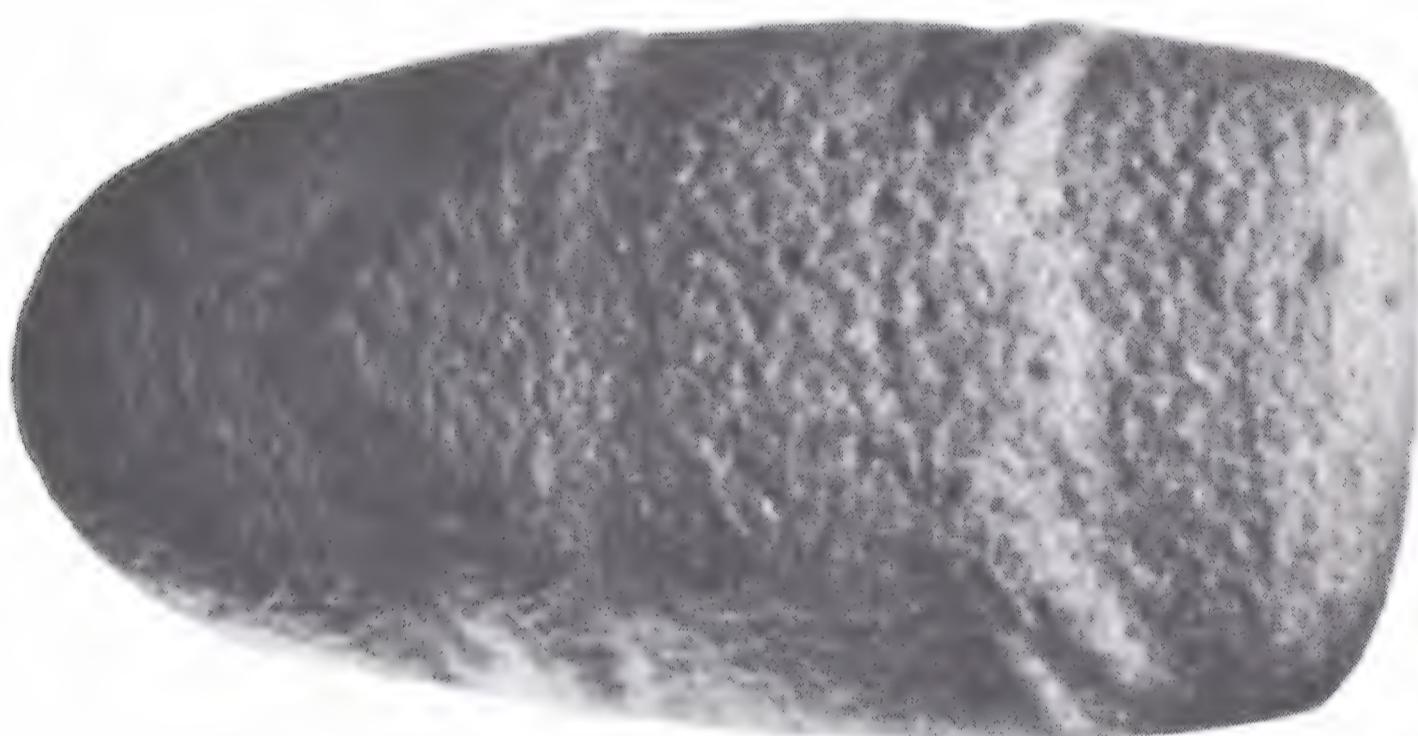
This concludes the description of representative sites in Attleboro. The artifacts recovered indicate a long period of Indian occupation.

Historic sources, however, fail to mention Indians as actually living within the Attleboro area, except for reference to a group residing at "Sinnichiconnet" in 1666. It would seem that the general area that now includes the municipality of Attleboro must have been abandoned by the natives at some time prior to the coming of the Europeans. The archaeological record from the camp sites offer similar evidence. At sites known to have been occupied by Indians from 1600 onward, items of European origin, often called "trade goods" may be expected. In our archaeological work elsewhere at sites of this period, we have found such items as gun flints, English and Dutch pottery, copper or brass projectile points, and sometimes artifacts of metal made by the Indians from material obtained from the English. No such artifacts were in the Richardson collections. Of course, it is possible that the Richardsons did not pick up or retain trade material; they may have not recognized it for what it was. This kind of selective surface collection often distorts the conclusions of the archaeologists.

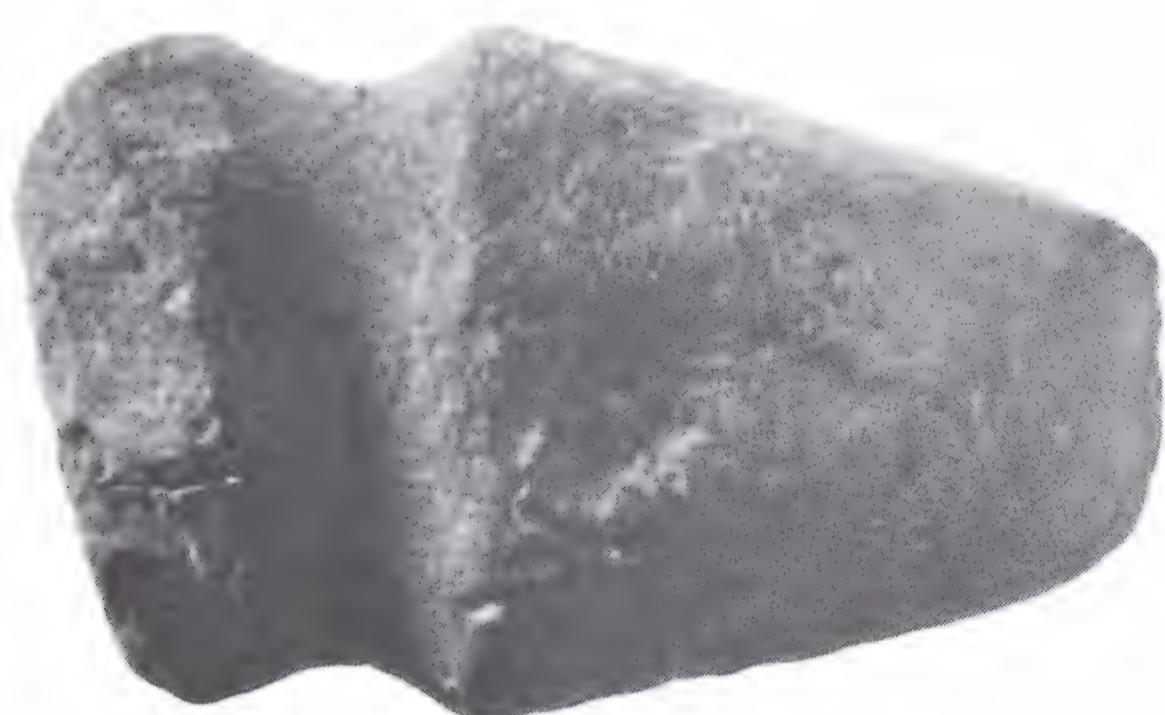
The absence of Indian occupants from Attleboro in the colonial period may have been caused by a terrible plague which devastated the natives of this area about 1617. Contemporary records refer again and again to this sickness, from which the Indians really never recovered. The precise nature of the disease will probably never be known. The speed with which it spread among the Indians and the fatal nature of its attack points to some virus to which the native population had never before been exposed. Such a source would have been the crew of some party of European explorers or a shipwrecked sailor who made contact with



CELT. Horton-Angell Factory Site. Length 5 inches



CELT WITH EFFIGY. Bronson Garden Site. Length 5 inches



FULL-GROOVED AXE. Thacher Brook at South Main Street. Length 4½ inches
All from Richardson Collection. Bronson Museum

some of the aborigines. A French ship, for example, is known to have been cast ashore on the Cape about this time; several of its crew survived and were captured by Indians. Whatever the origin or nature of this epidemic, the Wampanoags and the Massachusetts bore the brunt of its fury. Whole villages were wiped out before the sickness abated. For example, the village of Squanto at Pawtuxet (Plymouth) was thus affected; this we know from Governor Bradford, who had the story from Squanto himself. This may well have been the fate of the Wampanoags who lived in ancient Attleboro.

An account by Winslow of a journey along the Taunton River in 1621 will serve to give us a glimpse of what Attleboro looked like at that time. Winslow writes:

The ground is very good along both sides, it being for the most part cleared. Thousands of men have lived here, which died in the great plague not long since and a pity it is to see so many goodly fields and so well seated, without men to dress and manure the same . . . As we passed along we observed that there were few places along the river but had been inhabited, by reason whereof much ground was cleared, save of weeds which grew higher than our heads. There is much timber both Oakes, Walnut-tree, Firre, Beech and exceeding great Chestnut trees. The country in respect to the lying of it, it is both Champaine [a stretch of flat open country] and hilly, like so many places in England. In some places it is very rocky both above ground and in it, and though the country be wilde and overgrown with woods, yet the trees stand not thicke, but a man may well ride a horse among them.

We have now reached the threshold of the historic period, the time when history and prehistory become intermixed. The written record can now be used to supplement the less tangible data of archaeology. In order to complete the part that the Indian played in Attleboro history we must trespass upon an area that more properly belongs to the historian.

Only twenty years had passed since the settlement of Plymouth, yet the ancient domain of the Wampanoags was passing rapidly out of their hands. Companies of settlers from the mother towns of Boston Bay and Plymouth were acquiring huge tracts of land and attempting to build new towns in the wilderness. The demand for land by the whites was insatiable. Roger Williams had come from Salem and built him a house in Seekonk. Warned by the Plymouth authorities that he was

within the limits of their patent and was not welcome, he moved across the river to found Providence. In 1643, William Blackstone sold his farm on Shawmut Neck in Boston, saying that the area was becoming too crowded to suit his tastes. Obtaining land from the Indians on the east bank of the river then known as the Pawtucket or Patucket and about a mile and a half above what was to be the north boundary of Rehoboth, he built a home and planted an orchard. This farm or estate he named "Study Hill."

The river which the Indians called Patucket (the Blackstone) was the ancient boundary line between the Narragansetts and the Wampanoags. It originates in the Bay Colony and flows southerly through the present city of Woonsocket, between Lincoln and Cumberland. At Pawtucket Falls it becomes the Seekonk River as far as the narrows at Fort Hill, where it becomes the Providence River until it empties into Narragansett Bay.

It may be of interest to note that the word Wampanoag, which is so prominent in the history of Southern New England, comes from two Algonkian words, "wapan" and "aukes." Wamp or womp means white (as in wompum-peag — white beads), auke can be translated as land. Thus Wampanoag (wapanaukes) means literally "white land." In the more poetic tongue of the Indian it meant "the land of the white light" or "the east land." The people who lived there were "people of the east."

Most Indian place names end in ett or ette. This is the locative and means "at the place of" something which is described in the preceding syllables. Our modern maps are sprinkled with these descriptive place names, Pawtucket, Assawompsett, Saconnet, Mattapoisett, Massawachussettes, and so forth. Take Assawompsett as an example. Assa is stone, womp is white, with ett the locative — "place of the white stones."

You may have noted what may have seemed to be an error in the spelling in a previous passage. It was not an error, Massawachussettes is more nearly the correct spelling of the original word. Massa is great, wachuse is hill, Massawachussettes — "the place of the great hill" probably applied to the Blue Hills. The colonial Englishman had great difficulty even in spelling the words of his mother tongue. When he attempted to write down these long Indian words he was even more inaccurate. Imagine trying to reduce a spoken language to writing! Especially a language which was spoken in a gutteral tone and in which inflection bore so great a meaning. Unfortunately many of the place names have been so

mutilated that they are impossible to translate. Not only has the meaning of many of these beautifully descriptive names been lost, but they have been applied to places far removed from that to which the Indian gave them. South Swansea was the Indian Mattapoisett, but we have given this name to a town between Fairhaven and Marion.

In 1643 a company from Weymouth in the Bay, headed by their pastor, Mr. Samuel Newman, purchased a tract of land from the sachem of Pokonoket. This land was within the Indian Wannamoisett and included Rehoboth, Seekonk, Pawtucket, East Providence, and a portion of Swansea. Apparently Mr. Newman was unaware that the territory was within the jurisdiction of Plymouth. This erroneous assumption was soon corrected and the new settlement was declared to be under the authority of Plymouth by an act of June 1645.

In the meantime a settlement had begun within the purchase at a place called "Secunk" by the Indians. This word is spelled in twenty-nine different ways in sixty-four of the original records. (Early Rehoboth Vol. II, Richard Lebaron Bowen). Seekonk was an isolated outpost, the nearest town being at Cohannet (Taunton) about twelve miles away. However, the Indians at that time were friendly and, aside from an occasional minor complaint, the two peoples with completely different backgrounds, cultures, traditions, and necessities lived side by side in peace and understanding.

North of the Rehoboth Purchase of Newman and south of the Bay line was a large tract of land, uninhabited except for an Indian village at a place called Sinnichiconnet and, of course, the Blackstone farm on the Patucket River. The Rehoboth settlers must have been very familiar with the character of this country. They traversed its trails on their way to and from the Bay, and they probably hunted along its rivers. We have an interesting account of a journey through this territory written in 1645, which is preserved for us in the diary of John Winthrop. It is a typical account of the difficulties of every day travel in the wilderness. ("The Great Trail of New England," Harold Ayers, Meador Publishing Co., Boston, 1940.) The journey took twenty-five days to accomplish. It began on November 11, 1645, when Winthrop took the trail north from Boston Bay, headed west along the "Great Trail" to Springfield, Massachusetts, along the Connecticut River, and then down the river to Hartford. After waiting out a rather severe snow storm at Hartford, he returned home by the south or the shore path to Boston. The following are excerpts from Winthrop's diary of his journey through what is now Attleboro and Mansfield:

Dec. 3. I passed by canoe down Providence River and so landed two miles below Seekonk. Stayed there about an hour at Walter Palmer's house. Went to Wading River and waded over and there rested by the riverside. This was about fourteen miles from Seekonk, Mr. Coop and Mrs. Paine of Seekonk came to us in the night from ye Bayward. At moon rise they set us with their horses over the next river where the flood had carried away the bridges. Dec. 4. Waded over Naponset the tree being carried away by the thaw flood also another little river before. A third made a bridge by felling a small tree. Passed over Monotaquid at twilight, came by direction of the noise of the falls at the forge. Lodged the night at G. Jackson's, Mr. Hoffes farmer. Dec. 5, Friday, came to Boston and home. Deo gratias.

By an Act dated June, 1643, the General Court of New Plymouth created a formal procedure for the purchase of Indian lands. A group of persons wishing to obtain land for a settlement were required to form a company known as "The Proprietors" or sometimes "The Purchasers." This company then petitioned the Court for permission to purchase a described tract of land. If the Court were agreeable, it appointed a committee to negotiate the purchase with the Indians. Usually this committee consisted of well known residents of the colony. When the negotiations had been concluded and a deed secured, it was registered at Plymouth and the land became temporarily the property of the colony. It would then be transferred by deed to the proprietors, who would, in turn, survey and parcel out individual lots to its members. Usually a portion was reserved by the proprietors as common land to be later sold to new settlers. Apparently this process was an unhurried one; five years elapsed between the date of the purchase of the Rehoboth North Purchase from the sachem Wamsutta (1661) and the date of the deed from the Plymouth Court to the "Proprietors" (1666). These deeds are recorded in the Old Colony records as follows:

A DEED APPOINTED TO BE RECORDED

Know all men, that I Wamsitta, alias Alexander, chief sachem of Pokanokett, for divers good causes and valuable considerations me thereunto moving, have bargained and sold unto Captain Thomas Willett of Wannamoisett all those tracts of land scituate and being from the bounds of Rehoboth ranging upon the Pawtucket River unto a place called Waweypounshag, the place where Blackstone now sojourneth, and so ranging along to said river unto a place

called Messanegtacaneh, and from this on a straight line crossing through the woods unto the uttermost bounds of a place called Manantapett, or Wading River, and from the said River one mile and a half upon an east line, and from thence upon a south line unto the bounds of the town of Rehoboth; To have and to hold unto him and the said Captain Willett and his associates, their heirs and assigns forever; reserving only a competent portion of the land for some of the natives at Mishanegitaconnet, for to plant and sojourn upon, as the said Wamsitta alias Alexander and the said Captain Thomas Willett jointly together shall see meet; and the rest of all the land with all the woods, waters, meadows, and all emoluments whatsoever to remain unto the said Thomas Willett and his associates, their heirs, and assigns forever. Witness my hand and seal the eighth day of April in the year 1661.

*The mark of
X
Wamsitta alias Alexander
his seal (L.S.)*

*Signed, sealed, and delivered
in the presence of
John Brown, Jr.
Jonathan Bosworth
John Sassamon, the Interpreter**

**(John Sassamon was an Indian convert of Elliot's. He taught school at Natick and preached in the Indian church there. He later served as a sort of secretary to Philip (Metacomet) and was killed by the Indians at Assawompsett Lake.)*

Thomas Willett and his associates held title to this large tract of land north of Rehoboth until April 1666, when they transferred it to a committee of men appointed by the Court to act for the Colony. During this period several parcels of land within the purchase were granted to a number of individuals, as appears in the body of the Grant or Deed which the Court gave to the Proprietors of Rehoboth North Purchase.

Appended to the original Deed is this declaration:

April 10, 1666. Witnesseth these Presents, that Captain Thomas Willett above said hath and doth hereby resign deliver, and make over all and singular the lands above mentioned purchased of Wamsitta alias Alexander, chief Sachem of Pocanokett, according

unto the bounds above expressed, with all and singular benefits, privileges, and immunities thereunto appertaining, onto Mr. Thomas Prenc, Major Josias Winslow, Captain Thomas Southworth, and Mr. Constant Southworth, in behalf of the Colony of New Plymouth. In witness whereof he doth hereunto set his hand and seal.

Thomas Willett (seal)

*Signed, sealed, and delivered
in the presence of
Daniel Smith
Nicholas Peck*

Following is a copy of an order of the Court of New Plymouth that throws some further light on certain sub-grants contained in the final Deed or Grant to the Proprietors of Rehoboth North Purchase:

Whereas the Court, having formerly empowered Captain Thomas Willett to purchase of the Indians certain Tracts of Lands on the North of Rehoboth towards the Bay Line which he hath done, and is out of purse some considerable sum of money for the same, this Court have appointed the Honored Governor, the Major Winslow, Captain Southworth, and Mr. Constant Southworth, to treat with Captain Willett concerning the said purchase, and have empowered the above named Committee to take notice of what hath been purchased by him, and what Deeds he hath, and what his disbursements have been for the same, and hath also empowered them to settle upon him such a proportion of the said lands as may appear to be equal, upon any grant to him; and to accommodate the town of Rehoboth respecting an enlargement of their town, as the Court have promised; and to take such course concerning the remainder as he may be reimbursed of his just due and those lands may be settled by the Court.

*Extracted from and compared with the Records of the Court
per Samuel Sprague, Clerk*

A year later, in April 1666, the land was transferred by Deed or Grant to the Proprietors of Rehoboth North Purchase. The individuals who received special grants in this deed were probably those referred to as associates of Captain Willett. These, except for William Blackstone, are the first English to own land in the North Purchase.

The Deed or Grant of the Court to the Proprietors reads as follows:

Know all men by these presents, that we Thomas Prenc, Josias Winslow, Thomas Southworth and Constant Southworth by order of the General Court of New Plymouth, and in the name and behalf of the said Colony of Plymouth, have and by these presents do bargain, sell, alien, grant and confer, and make over unto the Proprietors of the town of Rehoboth (viz.) unto all that hold there, from a fifty pound estate and upwards, according to the first agreement, all and singular the lands, lying and being upon the north side of the town of Rehoboth bounded as followeth, (viz.) by a river commonly called Pawtucket River, on the west, and up said River unto the Massachusetts Line, and on the north-easterly side by said line until it cross the old road to the Bay, where a marked tree stands and a heap of stones, and thence a mile and a half east, and from thence by a direct line to the northeast corner of the present bounds of the town of Rehoboth, and so back again home unto the said line between the governments; with all the meadows, woods, waters, and all benefits, emoluments, privileges, and immunities, thereunto appertaining and belonging, to have and to hold to them and to their heirs forever; Excepting that we reserve within this tract a farm formerly granted unto Major Josias Winslow, and a farm granted unto Captain Thomas Willett, and two hundred acres of land unto Mr. James Brown about Snake Hill, and ten acres of meadow thereabouts, and a meadow called Blackstone's Meadow, the west plain and the south neck the quantity of two hundred acres, and the fifty acres granted to Rodger Amadown, with four acres of meadow next adjoining, three acres to Nicholas Ide, and a half an acre of meadow unto George Robinson; all residue of the lands above mentioned we do hereby firmly make over unto the above said purchasers and their heirs forever, and do exonerate, acquit, and discharge them and every of them for and concerning the premise.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals, this tenth of April 1666.

Signed sealed and delivered in the presence of

Isaac Howland

Thomas Prenc, (L.S.)

Josias Winslow (L.S.)

Thomas Southworth (L.S.)

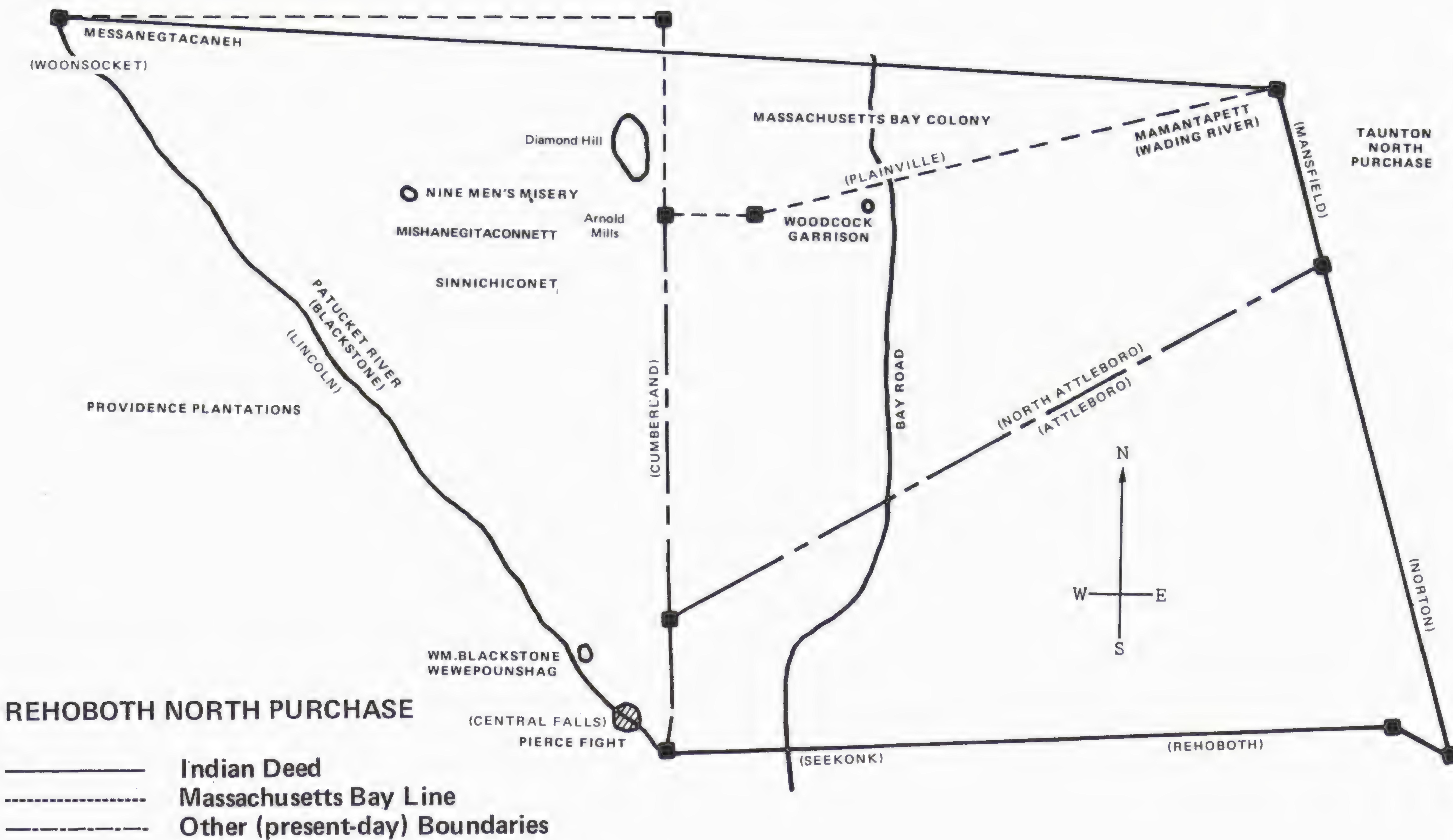
Constant Southworth (L.S.)

*The mark X of
John Parris*

*The mark X of
John Rockett*

THE INDIAN HISTORY OF ATTLEBORO

29



On the reverse of this deed is the following note:

*This Deed is recorded according to order by me Nathaniel Morton,
Secretary to the Court of New Plymouth.*

The period between 1670 and 1676 was a most critical one in the history of New England. The old way of life was passing, and a new and very different one was about to replace it. The history of this period, filled with boundary disputes, organizational acts, and so forth, which fill numerous pages of town and county records, is more properly the subject of those who will take up the story of Attleboro from that point forward. We trespass here only to recount the last few acts in which the aboriginal people of the area were involved.

Attleboro, although it had come under the jurisdiction of the Plymouth Court and into the possession of the Proprietors of Rehoboth North Purchase, was still a wilderness. It was an area of woods, swamps, and small rivers, crossed by the trails of past generations. Here and there some of those ancient paths had become roads. Where river crossings were too deep for the foot traveler, a bridge had been built or a tree felled to allow him to pass dryshod. The most important of these roads was the "Old Post Road" — now Newport Avenue — upon which one could travel with comparative ease from the Bay to the towns to the south.

Dwellings were scarce in the North Purchase area. About this time John Woodcock built what was called a Garrison House on the road in what is now North Attleboro. Blackstone's "Study Hill" stood by the Pawtucket River in the present Cumberland, Rhode Island. Whether or not any of the individuals to whom land had been granted in the proprietor's deed actually occupied it we do not know.

Among the Indians a new sachem had come into power. The days of the "good old Massasoit" were over. His elder son Wamsutta (Alexander), who had sold his patrimony to Captain Willett and his associates, had gone to join his forefathers. Metacomet (Philip) was sachem at Pokonoket.

Metacomet, from his youth, had watched the gradual dispersal of the Indian lands. He had seen his people dispossessed and crowded into isolated pockets about the perimeter of Plymouth Colony. The laws under which he and his people had lived for centuries were held in contempt by the English. A new, and as far as the Indians were concerned, incomprehensible code had been established. These laws were

apparently slanted in favor of the English and contrary to all of the concepts of the Indian mind. Land ownership, for example, was to the Indians a very simple thing. Land belonged to the people. In their name the sachem could sell co-occupation rights, but no one could fence it off and bar trespassers. The same land could be sold over and over again to as many people as could find room to live and hunt upon it. Under this concept one can understand why the Indians sold land for such insignificant payments. The animals that lived in the forest were there to provide man with food. Anyone with the necessary skill could hunt and kill them. But the English brought in strange creatures that they presumed to own. If an Indian killed one of these and was caught he would be taken to the English court and fined. If he did not have money with which to pay he must set in the stocks on muster day. That feeble band of white men who had nearly died at Plymouth and were befriended and fed by Metacomet's father had now become the arrogant lords of the land. To the young and patriotic sachem and his warriors this was intolerable. The people of Pokonoket were proud of their heritage and were determined to take matters into their own hands before it was too late.

The inevitable war began in June of 1675, in Swansea. The Indians first killed some of the English cattle. The settlers retaliated, and eventually human blood was shed. The Plymouth and Boston Bay Colonies reacted immediately to what they called "rebellion." Troops from the Bay came hurrying along the Bay Path on their way to the seat of war. Woodcock's Garrison was a favorite stopping place where rest and refreshment could be had. Indian war parties roamed about the wilderness keeping a wary eye upon the movement of English soldiers. Attleboro was not a safe place for a white man that summer. Whatever settlers were in the area quickly abandoned their clearings and fled to the towns for protection. All the outlying houses in Swansea, Taunton, Middleboro, Wrentham, and Providence were burned. Even the house of the venerable Blackstone, who had been the friend of the Indians for so many years, was destroyed.

The seat of war did not remain for long in Plymouth Colony. The wily Philip realized quickly the precarious position of his people at Mount Hope. Before the English could surround him, he broke away and slipped into the wilderness along the Connecticut River. The story of King Philip's War has been told too many times to bear repeating here. Very little of its action took place within the North Purchase. Eventually the stability and power of the English began to be felt. Although the Indians exacted a terrible price, the eventual outcome

soon became apparent. The Indians simply did not have the inner cohesiveness nor the supplies to wage unremitting warfare. In the spring of 1676 the Indian confederacy began to disintegrate. The war became a series of hit and run attacks by the Indians and a dogged but relentless pursuit and extermination by the English. Philip and his captains finally became resigned to their fate and apparently decided to return and die in the land of their fathers.

On Saturday evening, March 25, 1676, one of the small English "armies," under the command of Captain Michael Pierce, arrived at the "Ring of the Town" of Rehoboth. This force consisted of sixty-three white men and twenty friendly Indians. All the previous day they had been seeking a band of hostile Indians and were looking for a place to spend the night. They rested in the Rehoboth garrison, watched, no doubt, by the Indians for whom they were searching. In the morning someone looking over the palisade wall spotted a group of three or four warriors who "appeared to be wounded." Even after all these months of Indian warfare, Michael Pierce was still gullible. Hurriedly they seized their arms and started off after the Indians, who led them northward along the Pawtucket River. As soon as they had been lured far enough away from the garrison town, they suddenly discovered that they were in the presence of a large band of warriors. Surrounded, they attempted to cross the river to safety, only to find their way barred by a second war party evidently placed there to prevent their escape. Pierce formed his men into a circle and prepared to defend himself. One or two of the friendly Indians escaped the ring and carried the story back to Rehoboth. Pierce and his army died where they fought and the hastily organized relief party could only bury them where they had fallen.

Nine men were missing when the bodies were counted. Several weeks later they were found a few miles to the north of the border of Camp Swamp. Whether they broke through the ring of Indians and fled, only to be overtaken and killed, or whether they were taken prisoner and taken to the spot where their bodies were found, will never be known. This scene of their death is known as "Nine Men's Misery" and is now marked by a stone monument. Some weeks afterward, Canonchet, the great sachem of the Narragansett, was overtaken and killed at the foot of Blackstone's Study Hill.

In April of 1676 a small party of Indians, possibly some of the same band that ambushed Michael Pierce, were lurking about Woodcock's Garrison. Probably they were hoping to waylay anyone passing along the Bay Path. The Woodcock men seem to have been unaware of their

danger and were working in the corn field at some distance from the house. Suddenly they found themselves under fire from the nearby woods. One of Woodcock's sons, Nathaniel, was killed at the first fire, a son-in-law fatally wounded, and a third man slightly wounded. After a few more ineffectual shots, the Indians gave up the attack. They were probably too few to overcome the fortified post. Nathaniel was buried where he fell, and the spot has ever since been used as a burial ground.

This was the final act of hostility within the North Purchase. During the following summer the war came to an end with the slaying of Philip at Mount Hope and the capture and execution of Anawon and Tuspaquin, the only remaining sachems.

Some natives still lingered in the North Purchase area. Some were friendly or "Praying Indians" as Elliot's converts were called. Others were probably surviving hostiles who hid out in the northern areas until they felt it was safe to return to their former homes.

A final reference will serve to close this chapter of Attleboro history. In 1697 there were yet enough Indians about to warrant the passing of an act or By-Law to regulate their activity in the area. The following is that portion of the By-Laws which refers to Indians:

... touching Indian foreigners and strangers that have been complained of for uncivill carriages towards some of the Inhabitants of this town: for the preservation of which the inhabitants being desired to give their advise did meet and agree that by Joint consent have voted and passed this act that no forrin Indian stranger should be allowed to come into the town being armed for hunting pretense nor suffered in the same to abide in Drinkings and shotings at unreasonable times of night and threatening to several persons which is contrary to the laws of this province and disturbing to severall of this town; nor is any person or persons whatsoever within this town allowed to take in or harbor Indian or Indians armed other than such as hath been allowed or shall be allowed, but every person or persons transgressing against this order or By-Law shall pay a fine of five shillings each day for the use of the poor of this town for every such offense.

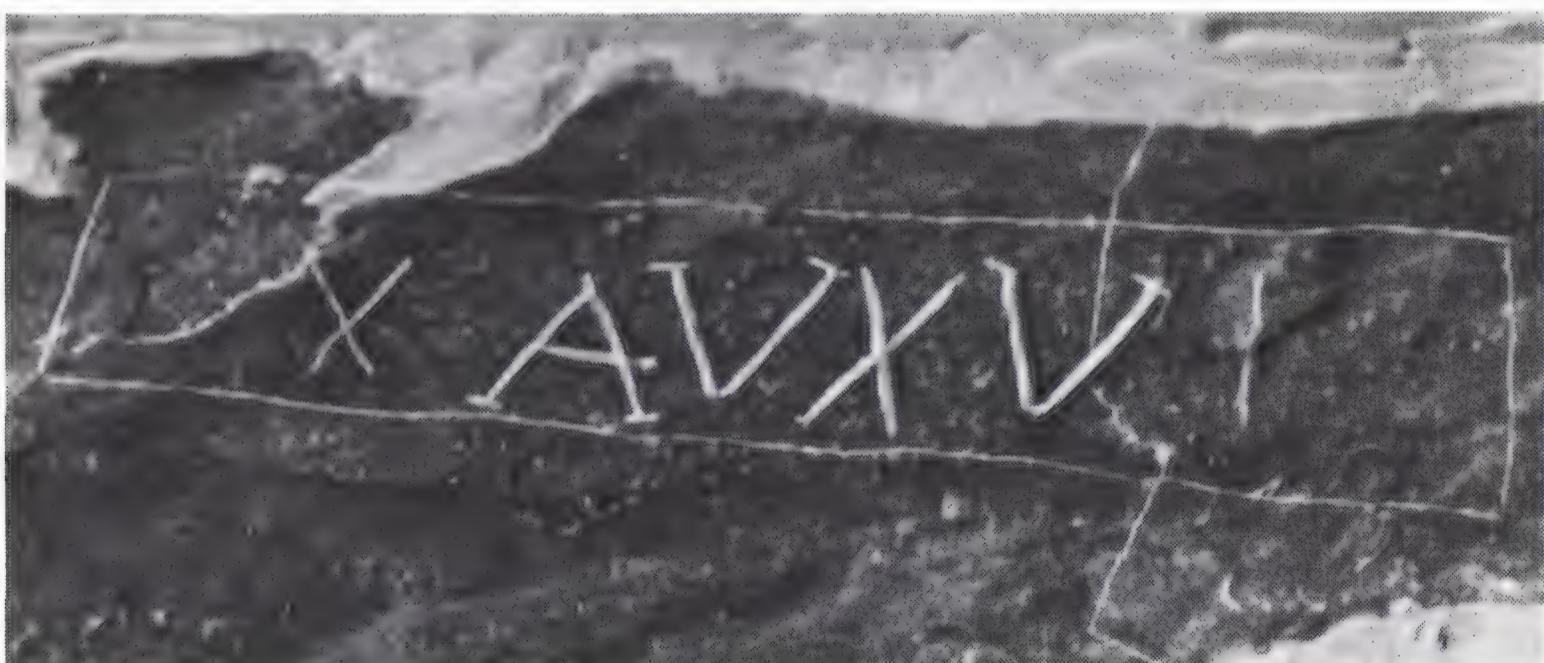
There remains one bit of historical evidence that may be of interest to Attleboreans. We are well aware that in the early days of the colony one of the compelling interests of the English was to acquire more and more of the Indian lands. At first a semblance of legality was followed, and

land was transferred by means of deeds which were registered at the General Court at Plymouth. In order to draw up such a document, it was necessary that the Indian who was presumed to have the right to sell the land should be able to affix his signature, and that others of his band should be able to witness the signature. To that end some of the more prominent of the Indians were taught to write or draw certain combinations of letters, and sometimes other characters, which could be accepted as signatures.

It must be kept in mind that to the illiterate aborigines these marks did not represent sounds, but were simply arbitrary symbols which they were told represented their names. Consequently, it made little difference to them whether or not the characters were always in the same order. Often they were drawn upside down and sometimes one character would be omitted or perhaps an extra one added. For example, in one instance of record Tuspaquin, the Black Sachem of Philip's War fame, wrote his name as T U S O I N, leaving out one syllable and omitting the basal mark in the letter Q. On the deed to Rehoboth North Purchase given by Wamsutta, the sachem of the Wampanoag, after the death of his father Massasoit in 1661-'62, his signature appears as:

Λ X Λ

At first glance these appear to be mere marks adopted by an unlettered Indian as his signature. During the drought of 1957, however, many of the ponds and lakes of southern New England dropped several feet from their usual level. On the north shore of Assawompsett Lake in Middleboro, a part of the domain of Wamsutta, a large rock, which is normally entirely submerged, appeared. On the sloping surface of this rock was the inscription below:



This rock was of the sedimentary variety which rapidly breaks up along natural fault lines, particularly when it is permeated with moisture and is suddenly exposed to the sun's heat. It was apparent that the portion of the rock bearing the signature was about to break off from the parent rock. It was therefore removed and is now on display in the Bronson Museum in Attleboro.

One recognizes immediately that the last three characters are those which appear on the North Rehoboth deed, except that they are reversed, or "right-side-up" as we would express it. A scholar familiar with ancient Greek characters has told us that the plain V, without the vinculum, was the ancient form of the letter L. Thus the letters A V X represent the short form of the name Alexander and probably constitute the signature of Wamsutta (Alexander). The final V that appears on the signature stone was not needed in the signature and probably is an example of the Indian propensity for adding or omitting a character. These letters or characters appear on the seal of the City of Attleboro, but in reverse, or "upside-down" from the way they were written by Wamsutta. It is intriguing to speculate that a microscopic examination of the original deed might reveal a faint A, or alpha, which probably formed a part of this famous signature.



PESTLE. From Ten Mile River bank below Wall Street
Richardson Collection. Bronson Museum.

THE INDIAN HISTORY OF ATTLEBORO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

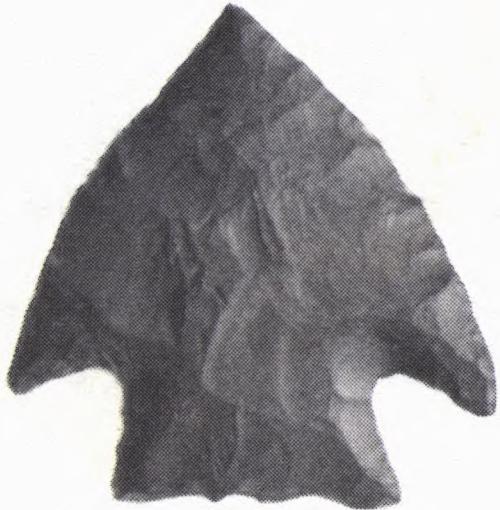
This volume was made possible by the cooperative assistance of local professional specialists, to whom the Attleboro Historical Commission and the Chamber of Commerce of the Attleboro Area wish to extend their most appreciative acknowledgments.

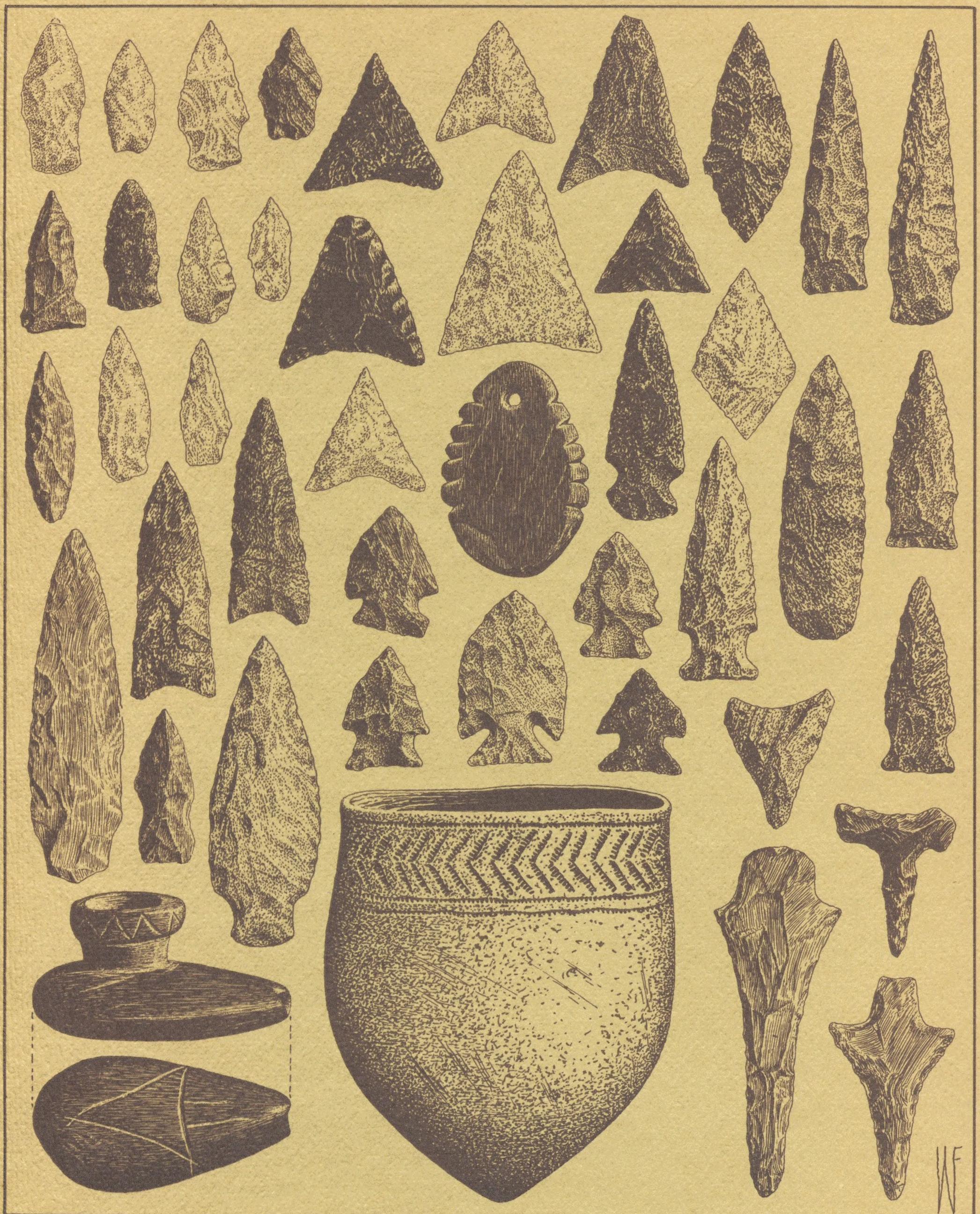
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The drawings above are of implements typical of those made and used by aborigines of the Attleboro area after A.D. 300. Illustrations include a pendant (center), a stone elbow pipe, drills, arrow and spear points, and a ceramic pot. Artifacts are reproduced here slightly less than two-thirds actual size except for the pot, which measures eleven inches in diameter at the mouth. Renderings were done by Mr. William S. Fowler, Editor, Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and are reproduced here through the courtesy of the Society. Readers interested in pursuing further the prehistory of the Attleboro area are referred to the Bronson Museum of the Society, located in the 8 North Main Street Building, Attleboro, to the various issues of the Bulletin, and to Dr. Robbins volume, The Amateur Archaeologist's Handbook.

